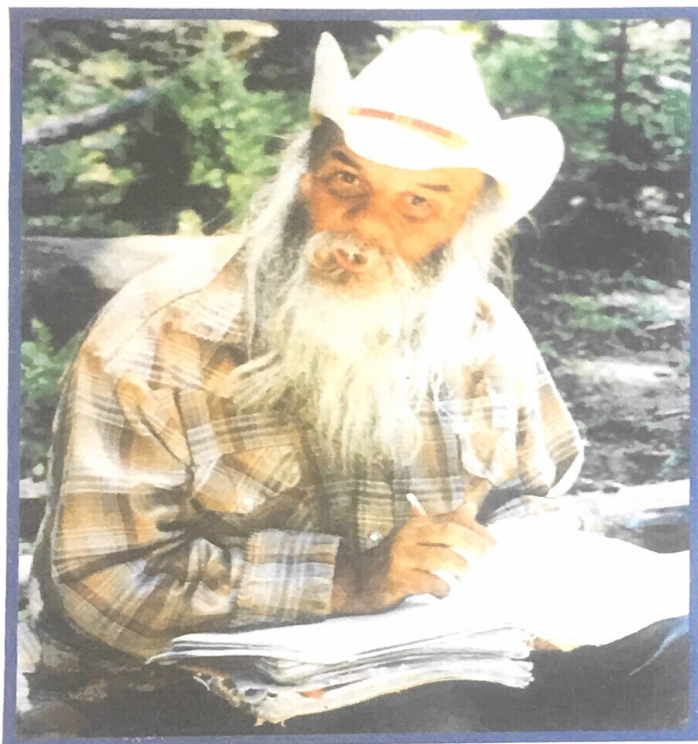


Rainbow Family Life Stories



*by Jodey Bateman.
Interviews with Rainbow
Family of Living Light
folks conducted between
1977 and 2008.*

Scanned in 2018.

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13.A

RICHARD (EAGLE FEATHER)

-interviewed in March, 1978

"We Lifted a Lid on a Garbage Can"

8 pages

[13.A]

Richard (Eaglefeather) and Michelle

[They were the couple central to setting up the Rainbow House in Austin. The interviews with them were done in March, 1978, when the Rainbow House was in full swing.]

Richard - We Lifted a Lid on a Garbage Can

It's all out of Central Casting. They all come from God. He sends out all the characters, and if he makes you a fool, it's OK.

I was born near Kansas City in 1948 on an Indian reservation. I was adopted. My stepmother told me my real mother wasn't an Indian. My stepfather was an oil field roughneck.

I was raised in Vivian, Louisiana. We moved to Pharr, Texas. I played football and ran track in Pharr high school. Our high school football team had state champion about three years in a row. We had a track team that broke every record and the records we made have still not been broken. The Spirit got us together, brother.

I had a football scholarship to Texas A and M in 1966. In the summers I worked in the oil fields to stay in shape. People on the A and M football team wanted to go to Nam. They thought the Marines might be easier than the football team. They were on it just because they got scholarships. They didn't know about Nam. I broke my neck playing football and busted three discs in my lower back. Until I went on the road and ran out of everything, I never heard of the Rainbow Family.

All those people I used to play football with—many, many people—they've all melted into the distance and I've never heard from them since.

I was married when I was 19, but it was annulled. I never drank a beer until I was 20 years old. I never smoked a cigarette until I was 21. My family did those things—I didn't.

I worked in the oil fields after I quit college. Then I hitched up to Chicago to work in a factory. We went on a lunch break to a boy's house and she brought out some hash. It was the first time I ever got high. When I first smelled the hash, I knew there was something fetching me. I didn't know I was fucked up until I got back in the car and somebody turned on the tape deck. I never heard anything like it before. Never felt anything like it.

Then I worked for the Job Corps in San Marcos, Texas as a

counselor for about a year and a half. It was pretty rough. Most of the Job Corps camps in the USA were destroyed by their own corps men. It was like jail - no women. They had their choice of going to jail, Nam or the Job Corps. I even remember the percent of how it all worked - 27% of the Job Corps had IQ's under 60, meaning they weren't supposed to be there. What do you suppose the reason for all their problems was? They didn't know what was happening. They couldn't even fucking sign a check. Hell yes, they were illiterate.

The DEO put whoever they wanted to run the Job Corps camp - people that were inadequate. The Job Corps honchos got \$25 a head for getting somebody in the Job Corps and they didn't care if that was the space for him or not. I was asked to resign because I wouldn't dress to conform. Like I'd put on gym shorts and work out with my weights in my room. I was supposed to have a suit and tie on as an example.

In 1972 I went to Estes Park, Colorado and worked in a ski lodge, about 100 rooms, built in 1886. I ran two dormitories. I really got off on the kids there 15 or 16 years old. They'd smoke a joint with me, play Jimmi Hendrix on their guitars and talk about Shakespeare or the White Light. They turned me onto Hindu philosophy. I hadn't heard about it too much before. I was a football player in college and I moved in a whole other world.

I was 15 miles from the Rainbow Gathering of 1972 at Granby and I had no idea what the Rainbow Family was and people from the lodge went to the gathering and had to hike for miles to get in. The roads were blocked by the National Guard and people walked for miles back in the mountains - 15,000 people to Strawberry Lake. I didn't go. The people from the lodge came back with the most incredible tales.

Then I substitute taught English and coached PE in four little towns until I found out what it was really about. You have to teach what the principal says and show just the films he wants you to see and it's a fucking bore and the kids know it. Finally the principal said for the good of the school I couldn't

stay around because of my long hair.

In 1973 I was passing back through Vivion, Louisiana, the little town I grew up in. There was a swimming pool there, the biggest one in the South at one time. Then they closed it down for five years to keep from having blacks in the pool with whites - like black men in the water with white women and white men in the water with black women. I was a life guard and this lady from the women's club got me to go to the city council and ask them to re-open the pool. Now they had cops around the school all the time after it integrated. And I told the city council, "The problem you all have with the pool is the same one you have with the whole town. You don't trust the young people and they're just waiting around, they ain't got nothing to do."

This little town - they were really afraid the blacks in the swamps were going to come wipe them out. So when we opened the swimming pool, they started letting blacks come one day and whites the next, and then they started letting blacks and whites come together, but they had boys come one day and girls the the next. But after a while, they were all swimming together - blacks, whites, boys, girls.

I spent a year doing that little trip as a life guard and it was one of the highest manifestations of the Spirit I have seen. I little kids holding hands in a circle, 50 at a time, not one of them knowing how to swim and in a couple of weeks they were jumping off a 12-foot diving board.

The First Rainbow Gathering I went to was in Utah in 1974. I went there with a little band of people called the Patriarchs. I got there two weeks before the gathering started. We were going to have it on Mount Zion in Mount Zion National Forest and we ended up having it in Dixie, Utah at a reservoir. I tried to leave three times because there was too much arguing and confusion. I tried to leave three times because there was too much arguing and confusion. I didn't know what was going on. I just heard the leaders were arguing about where to move the gathering.

Finally I left and I was picked up by people going back into the gathering, The Essene Family. They wanted me to work in their

healing tent at the gathering I was always massaging people there - and I love it.

The thing that flipped me out at the gathering was the first council I went to - somebody gave me and a girl hits of LSD because I said I liked the way he played his flute. Medicine Story was in the middle of the circle, naked as a jaybird with his staff and with feathers in his hair. He made a prayer to the Great Spirit and asked for love in everybody's heart. Everybody started OMing and I felt like the universe was singing. I felt a band of energy run through my chest. I felt like everybody was one great soul.

I left the gathering with this lady I'd met there. She wanted to check out some communes in California and Oregon. She had dropped out of working for her master's. So we checked them out. She really thought she was gonna find something because she had been writing them. We found out all these people have their separate lives, and you just can't go up to their communes and say, "Well, here I am!"

We came back to Austin and managed an apartment complex. It filled up with ex mental patients and people who came from other towns looking for therapy at the Austin Mental hospital. I was doing the same thing there that I am here at The Rainbow co-op. I counselled with a man in Austin named Roderick Thompson. He helped write a book called Nutrition Against Disease. He doesn't eat anything. He counsels with God. He taught me many things.

I had a son during that time. We didn't get married. She had a natural child birth. I was there. It was the most incredible experience I've ever had.

I went to the Arkansas Gathering in 1975. I had met people at the Utah Gathering and I thought they were really far out and I wanted to meet them again. I wanted to find out what it was all about - get down with everybody. Well, I did it. I was there three weeks before the gathering and found the band of people trying to get the thing started.

About 20 of us were eating peyote way up in the mountains. Barry came up with his plunker - a two-stringed instrument - and an elk horn he used to blow to call for councils and with feathers on his hat and his patched leather pants. He looked like they just

flew him in and he said, "Is this the Rainbow Family?" I hung out with Chuck Windson and Barry and Jayson after that.

I remember that in Arkansas we were camped at Buffalo River, 15 miles from the nearest town. Some local people wanted to come out and stop us. They had cattle trucks to round up the people without any clothes on and they fired several blasts of a shotgun. And we formed a circle to protect the people without their clothes on and gave the OM once. It blew them away. The people that came against us lost their jobs. The power in that OM is not to be fooled with.

After Arkansas, I went to Mount Shasta to the gathering of the Divine Light. It was pretty heavy. They stayed all summer. It was like the Rainbow Gathering - people coming from all over the world.

My girl left just before the Arkansas Gathering. She decided it would be too much for her. She went to Cleveland and I hitched there after I had left Mount Shasta and picked her up and we went to Lander, Wyoming. We camped out there for three months and worked for the Bureau of Land management. Then I went to the Rio Grande Valley and got 12 pounds of pot and took it to Cleveland and sold it in December. In Cleveland we separated. I left her there with the car and the kid.

I went to Mexico after I left my old lady in Cleveland. I gave massages there professionally at the residences of people by appointment. I massaged the wife of the governor of Guanajuato. I turned a whole lot of people on. I had an old man who would chant an ancient Japanese chant while I massaged him. He was an agent of the White Light, and it would flow while I massaged.

I went to the Habitat Conference in Vancouver, Canada, in June, 1976. The representatives of each country got together at the UN building there to discuss the problems of food and shelter of the world family. And outside Vancouver the Third World had their habitat conference - the Indians and the various social groups. The only constructive thing that I know that came out of it, they sent a petition to the UN for every nation in the world to set aside one percent of their budget for an adequate water supply.

Then I went to the Montana Gathering. Me and the Camp Family, Rose, David Beckwith, Buckwheat, Catfish and Margo - set up the first kitchen where you could get food 24 hours a day. They ain't never had that before at a Rainbow Gathering. Rose paid \$1,000 for that food.

I met Michelle at the gathering. We camped with the Carp Family at Lake Austin for a while after the gathering. Then we went down to Mexico. It was better in Mexico this time. The people were ready for us. We averaged three massages a day. We asked for \$10 a massage, but if they didn't have it, we would give it. Michelle is a licensed masseuse. We massaged polio victims. We used to turn people on that had multiple sclerosis. Some of them had been dead in much of their bodies for 15 years. We would zap them on acupuncture points and they would really get off on it. Some of them would pay \$25 for 30 minutes.

Dominic from the Hobo Kitchen at the Montana Gathering told me he wanted me to find food for the gathering in New Mexico. So I hopped on my bike and I went over western Mexico looking for food. It was a drag. I didn't vibe into anything. I went to the gathering site in New Mexico May 10. Then I went to Eden Hot Springs at Safford, Arizona. Eden Fruit Company there started the Food Co-ops in Arizona. They would go down to Mexico to get fruit to sell and then have enough left over to feed the gathering. Everybody worked their asses off. They bought fruit at the border in the big market places.

Michelle and I started the sprout kitchen and the bakery at the New Mexico Gathering. We lived in the cave in back of it.

We went on the caravan with Jayson and Barry after the gathering. They were gonna set up camp on Bureau of Land Management land at Velarde, New Mexico. It was dry land. There wasn't any water. There were very few trees. They were gonna make something out of it. make the best of a very bad place so they could get some respect out of the BLM. They stayed there for several weeks and had a camp for people passing through. A lot of people came in. They eventually moved out. Barry went somewhere to work on the next gathering. I worked in Green Life restaurant for a while after that.

I let my spirit take charge of my thinking. My unconscious takes care of everything. It's all in service. The whole Co-op House was started by lifting off the top of a garbage can looking for vegetables and saying, "OK, that's how it's done. Now how about feeding us all?"

Rose gave us \$1,000 the first night we were here in the house to spend on food in bulk—things like Tamari soy sauce and honey and oats. We get bulk food donated from a co-op. All we got to do is go pick it up. I hit five stores a day for contributions.

This Communications Co-op House is known throughout Mexico and Canada. I've had over 300 people stay in the house. We're doing it—ain't nobody else in Austin doing it or it would have been done. They're down on us because we lifted a lid on a garbage can. I told the Building Standards Commission when they had a hearing about shutting us down, "Every social agency in Austin sends people to our house to stay. They're not dealing with the drunks, the homeless and the helpless. We are. Our address is on the police bulletin board and they tell people about this place. Then they won't come when we phone them for help with trouble. People hear about this place at the 7-11's and bars and come. The Rainbow Family has no card-carrying members, no special books to read and no hierarchy."

We don't come under any of the laws the city of Austin has, because everything we do, we do it freely. We don't have to have a restaurant license, rooming house license or a license to deal with runaways, because nobody has to pay us for anything. Our attorney's just going to keep on giving us time to stay here until we can find another place. Now we're going to be here at this house a while. We're working with the ICC—the Inter-Co-operative Council—to find another place to stay in. Hopefully with some land we can make a garden on.

[The Rainbow Co-op House finally had to close in June, 1978 and never re-opened. The building was torn down. In December, 1978, Richard told me some afterthoughts.]

I felt really stoned on the Spirit at the Rainbow House—stronger than I ever have. The only thing I was ever afraid of was not praying enough. I had to go in my room sometime and pray and do yoga.

I felt like I was going to have to disappear. I couldn't believe these assholes who try to drag you down when you're trying to help. People going crazy all around me. I jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. One guy

tried to dissolve our charter. He went to the secretary of state's office. You should have seen the stuff this guy had written. He said I was claiming to be Christ. They told him "You can't do nothing about it."

Here's a good quote - "Thy way that does not provide for the wayfarer is no way to fare upon."

[Both before and since the Austin Rainbow house there have been free places for food and shelter called Rainbow houses around the US. The first I know of was the Rainbow house in Eugene, Oregon, set up by Barry and others. In Austin in 1988-89 there was a large house to shelter transients kept by Mother Nature, a woman in her 50's who has been to the Rainbow Gatherings. However she insisted her place was not to be considered a Rainbow House. Among others who helped out at Mother Nature's place was Spring Flower, who also put on Rainbow Picnics in the Austin parks. As of January, 1989, it was estimated that there were 15,000 homeless in Austin, a city of around 400,000 people.]